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Catullan Voices in *Heroides* 15: How Sappho Became a Man

Judith P. Hallett

1 My title – « Catullan Voices in Heroides 15: How Sappho Became a Man » – pays tribute to another title, that of an illuminating essay by Pamela Gordon on the construction of Sappho's gender in this complex and challenging poem: « The Lover's Voice in *Heroides* 15: Or, Why Is Sappho A Man? »[1] By looking at some echoes of Catullus' poetry in the Epistula Sapphus, chiefly but not exclusively from Catullus' poems in the elegiac meter, this discussion will pay Gordon a further form of tribute. For I will argue that these echoes, these Catullan voices, strengthen her contention that Ovid presents his readers with a « mannish Sappho », a « Roman construction with few roots in the early Greek tradition. »[2]

2 Gordon defines *Heroides* 15, the epistle from Sappho to Phaon, as « an elegiac poem that appears in our printed editions as the last installment of Ovid's unanswered letters from abandoned heroines. » After noting that she does « not consider the attribution [of the poem's authorship] to Ovid a settled issue », Gordon explains that she refers to the author as « Ovid », in quotes, « for convenience. »[3] In this discussion I, too, will refer to the author of *Heroides* 15 as Ovid. But I do so out of conviction, not merely convenience. Several of the arguments favoring authenticity presented in a 1996 essay by Gianpiero Rosati affirm my conviction.[4] So do the intertextual links between several Catullan poems and *Heroides* 15 that I would like to explore.

3 In arguing that Ovid characterizes Sappho as a man, Gordon compares Sappho in *Heroides* 15 to other Ovidian figures, both male and female, primarily those populating his elegiac poems. She contends that Ovid represents Sappho as different from his other enamoured female characters, pointing out that Ovid's Sappho adopts a sexually active stance, provides details of her own sexual arousal and fulfillment, and testifies to her beloved's physical appeal. « Whereas », Gordon observes, « the other heroines never describe sexual contact directly, Sappho boasts of her own sexual expertise and indulges in the most graphic descriptions of sex in the *Heroides*. » Gordon notes in addition that « True

parallels to Sappho's explicit language and lecherous gaze are to be found not in the women's letters of the *Heroides*, but in the male voices of Ovid's other works and the male letter-writers in the three pairs of male/female exchange that follow the letter from Sappho. »[5]

4 Within the limited scope of her essay, Gordon is not able to examine Ovid's own, male, and often first person, voice in his other works. Yet both sides in the argument over whether or not Ovid himself wrote *Heroides* 15 adduce its close relationship with *Amores* 2.18. Composed in the first-person, *Amores* 2.18 indicates that Ovid himself wrote the words and expressed the tears of legendary female heroines (21-22: *aut, quod Penelopes verbis reddatur Ulixi / scribimus et lacrimas, Phylli relicta, tuas*, « or we write the kind of poetry sent to Ulysses in the words of Penelope and your tears, abandoned Phyllis »). His list of heroines begins, as do the women's letters of the *Heroides* themselves, with Penelope; it ends in line 26 with Sappho (*dicat et Aoniae Lesbis amata lyrae*, « and what the woman of Lesbos, having been loved, of the Aonian lyre, may say »). Ovid then speaks of one Sabinus as writing responses to these letters. What is more, line 34 – with det *votam Phoebo Lesbis amata lyram*, « may the woman of Lesbos, having been loved, give her lyre as a pledge to Phoebus Apollo » – concludes the list of Sabinus' subjects with a description of Sappho that itself echoes line 26: as offering Apollo her lyre in gratitude for Phaon's reciprocation of her love.[6]

5 Nor does Gordon have the opportunity to examine the earlier works of Roman poetry that Ovid evokes in *Heroides* 15. As Federica Bessone and Gregson Davis have recently noted, however, Ovid here responds to Horace's representation of Sappho in *Odes* 2.13. Davis also views Ovid as alluding to Horace, *Odes* 3.13, the description of the fons Bandusiae, as part of an « indirect, intertextual strategem » to exploit Sappho's « poetic fame » through borrowing from a « great Roman lyric model who had done most to adapt the Lesbian *barbitos* to Roman literary culture. » This paper will further remedy this omission by examining and analyzing some of its « Catullan voices ».[7]

6 But I will also consider some other issues related to gender construction in Latin love poetry. Chief among them is to what extent, if at all, Ovid'characterization of Sappho here involves the phenomenon of « transgendering », the positive attribution to women of traits and behavior which a culture conventionally views as male qualities and conduct, and vice-versa, rather than a « sex-role cross-over ».[8] After all, other scholars regard Sappho's « femininity » – and Ovid's appropriation of her specifically female voice and traits – as a given, and as central to the dynamics of this poem. In claiming, for example, that *Heroides* 15 « stages authorship as a volatile rivalry [between Sappho and Ovid] in which both parties can be seen to betray their mutual dependency », Vicky Rimell asserts that Ovid is affirming his own masculine identity by writing, « through and over », an apparently « written woman » aligned with the feminization of elegy. She claims, too, that Sappho fulfills « a truly heterosexual role as a reproductive woman and eroticised intermediary for male creative power ».[9]

7 No less important, however, is the related issue, investigated and problematized by Rimell and Davis among others, of Ovid's own identification with Sappho, the ways in which her characterization relates to the male, and literarily complex, Ovidian authorial persona. Davis, for example, ponders the « rhetorical gain » that Ovid achieves « in respect to articulating his own aesthetic project » from « impersonating the female qua writer », and « appropriating (and refashioning) the figure of Sappho ». He concludes that Ovid's text is « concerned far more with self-definition, than with the disclosure of an

essential female interiority ». Identifying this « self » as a « poetic identity », the « elegiac subject », he argues that « the fictive female writer of the *Heroides*... is a useful alibi for the male composer (*auctor*) whose central agenda is the construction and authentication of his own elegiac persona. »[10]

Catullus and Sappho; Catullus and Ovid

8 There are multiple intertextual links between Catullus'poems and the epistle from Sappho to Phaon. Their presence should hardly occasion surprise, as Catullus pays frequent homage to Sappho, and Ovid frequent homage to Catullus. If someone other than Ovid were to have written *Heroides* 15, the Catullan echoes in the poem may have been chosen to render Ovidian authorship of this « Sapphic elegy » more plausible. But it is more plausible still that in *Heroides* 15 Ovid is, as usual, evoking the earlier poet to signal that Catullus' devotees occupy a privileged place in his coterie of appreciative and informed readers, and that their informed engagement with his own writing may render their experience of reading more challenging, but yields special benefits in its turn.[11]

9 Catullus offers his homages to Sappho in a variety of forms. In poem 51 Catullus translates, albeit freely, Sappho, fragment 31 L-P, verses acclaimed by the ancient critic Longinus as an exemplar of emotional expression. A simile likening a maiden to a flower in 62, the second of two wedding-poems, alludes to Sappho's fragment 105c L-P. In poem 11 as well as in 51, Catullus adapts Sappho's distinctive meter; as T.P. Wiseman has observed, « the wonderfully evocative concluding image » of 11, « alludes to one of Sappho's own wedding poems, in which the cut flower is the bride's virginity. » At lines 16-17 of poem 35, moreover, Catullus compliments the literarily appreciative inamorata of his poet-friend Caecilius with the description *Sapphica puella Musa doctior*, « girl more learned than the Sapphic Muse. »[12]

10 Ancient characterizations of Sappho as the « Tenth Muse » might well imply that Catullus here refers to Sappho herself. But Catullus may also be speaking of the woman who inspires his own poetic efforts. In twelve of his poems he refers to her as Lesbia, thereby calling to mind Sappho's native island of Lesbos while employing a metrically equivalent pseudonym for her actual name.[13] If we accept Apuleius' claim at Apology 10 that this woman was actually named Clodia, and take some relevant external evidence into account, we can further identify Catullus' female beloved as the noblewoman Clodia Metelli, wife of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer, consul in 60 BCE.[14]

11 Ovid himself provides a substantial amount of this relevant external evidence about Catullus'beloved, identified by a name that evokes Sappho and her island. At *Tristia* 2. 421 ff., Ovid justifies the erotic content and message of his own poetry by citing a series of Roman literary predecessors, among them Catullus. In lines 427 through 434, Ovid asserts that « in this [erotically suggestive] way his own woman – to whom the false name Lesbia was accorded – was often sung about by the sexually playful Catullus. » (427-428 *sic sua lascivo cantata est saepe Catullo / femina, cui falsum Lesbia nomen erat*). Ovid then adds the following: « not satisfied with this woman, [Catullus] circulated many love poems in which he himself admitted to his own adultery » (429-430 *nec contentus ea, multos vulgavit amores, / in quibus ipse suum fassus adulterium est*).

12 Ovid says nothing more about this Lesbia's actual identity in this passage. But he may be implicitly connecting her with Clodia Metelli through his references to other Roman

writers. A few lines later he observes that « [in the books of these Roman writers] Metella, falsely represented a while ago by the name Perilla, is now read, called by her own name » (437-438 *et quorum libris modo dissimulat Perillae / nomine, nunc legitur dicta Metella sua*). A few lines before that he also mentions one Ticidas, noting « why should I mention the poetry of Ticidas, of Memmius, in whose works things are named and these names accorded respect » (433-434 *quid referam Ticidae, quid Memmi carmen, apud quos / rebus adest nomen nominibus pudor*).

13 Significantly Apuleius, *Apology* 10, which asserts that Catullus used Lesbia as the pseudonym for Clodia also states that Ticidas similarly referred to Metella as Perilla: « and, similarly, Ticidas, because he had written of her who was Metella as Perilla, » et *Ticidam similiter quod quae Metella erat Perillam scripserat*. So, too, this Metella would appear to be Caecilia Metella, the daughter of Clodia Metelli and Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer, a noblewoman pseudonymously celebrated in verses by her lover Ticidas as well as a poet in her own right.[15]

14 Just as Ovid legitimates his erotic poems in *Tristia* 2 by citing the precedent of the Roman Catullus, earlier in the same poem, at lines 365-366, Ovid includes Sappho in a lengthy roster of Greek poets whose erotic themes justify his own subject matter. What is more, he here refers to her as Lesbia Sappho, with the adjective that Catullus uses for his beloved:*Lesbia quid docuit Sappho, nisi amare puellas?/ tuta tamen Sappho, tutus et ille fuit*, « what did Sappho of Lesbos teach, except girls to love [or to love girls]? Still Sappho was safe and [Anacreon] was safe. ») At line 183 of *Heroides* 15 itself, Ovid also uses the rare Greek noun *poetria* for Sappho:*grata lyram posui tibi, Phoebe, poetria Sappho*, « I, Sappho the female poet, gratefully have dedicated my lyre to you, Phoebus Apollo. » The word *poetria* is itself linked with the actual woman whom Catullus called by the name of Lesbia. After all, at *Pro Caelio* 64 Cicero attacks Clodia Metelli for devising imaginary plots to discredit her former lover Caelius with the dismissive phrase *vetus et plurimarum fabularum poetria*, « a longtime female poet of a very great number of scenarios. »

15 Ovid's multiple tributes to Catullus and his poetry also assume a variety of forms. At *Amores* 3.15.7-8 Ovid explicitly invokes Catullus as a literary role model, expressing the hope that he himself will be called the glory of the Paelignian people, just as Mantua rejoices in Vergil and Verona in Catullus (*Mantua Vergilio, gaudet Verona Catullo / Paelignae dicar gloria gentis ego*). More obliquely, at *Amores* 3.14, Ovid recalls, and himself revises, not only Catullus'efforts to translate and adapt Sappho in poem 51 but also Catullus'poem 85, *odi et amo*. 3.14. 38, *perque meos artus frigida gutta fluit*, substitutes a chill drop for the subtle flame that flows through the speaker's limbs in Catullus 51.9-10 (*tenuis sub artus / flamma demanat*), 3.14. 39 – *tunc amo, tunc odi frustra quod amare necesse est*, « then I love, then I hate in vain because it is compulsory to love » – reverses the Catullan order of the passions described as afflicting him at 85.1.[16]

16 At *Amores* 3.9. 61-62, Ovid ideally situates Catullus in the Elysian fields with the newly dead Tibullus, addressing him as « learned », *docte: obvius huic venias hedera iuvenalia cinctus / tempora cum Calvo, docte Catulle, tuo*, « may you come to meet him, garlanded on your temples with youthful ivy, learned Catullus, with your Calvus ».[17] Even Ovid's boasting about his own past sexual achievements in *Amores* 3.7 involves a Catullan literary precedent. In lines 24 through 26, Ovid recalls that a woman named Libas was repeatedly « *done unto* » (continuata) three times by his sexual exertions, and that Corinna demanded from him and he himself managed nine performances in a brief night (*numeros sustinuisse*

novem). Such language recalls Catullus 32.8 with its more explicitly worded injunction to Ipsitilla that she prepare nine repeated fuckings (novem continuas fututiones).

17 Ovid's ventriloquizing of female voices in the *Heroides* (and in portions of his other poems as well) can similarly claim Catullan antecedents. On at least seven different occasions Catullus represents his *puella* (although he does not always refer to her by the name of Lesbia) as a speaker.[18] The Catullan corpus, moreover, assigns nearly 300 lines to various female figures. Among these talking women are Cybele in 63, Ariadne in 64, and the *coma Berenices* in 66. We also find a group of female figures – the *puellae* performing the marriage hymn – speaking in 62: a poem inspired by (and indebted to) Sappho's own epithalamia. Their words pointedly allude (as Catullus does in propria persona at 11.23) to Sappho, fragment 105c Lobel-Page.[19]

Catullan echoes in *Heroides* 15: Where is Catullus'Lesbia*?*

18 What is, therefore, surprising about Ovid's evocations of Catullan language and themes in *Heroides* 15 is not their presence and prominence. Catullus' example and influence permeate the Ovidian corpus. Rather, it is that none of these Catullan evocations seem to echo passages in which Catullus' Lesbia speaks. These Catullan reminiscences that Ovid places in the mouth of his Sappho, in fact, often come from poems in which Catullus' *puella* is not even mentioned. They call to mind Catullan poems concerned mainly with issues of male gender identity, among them Catullus' own poetic preoccupations as an innovative and erudite literary figure, homoerotically engaged sophisticate, and sorrowfully bereaved brother.

19 Curiously, the adjective *Lesbia*, which we have seen Ovid applying to Sappho in *Tristia* 2, does not appear in *Heroides* 15 either. To be sure, at line 100 Sappho tells Phaon that he would have said *Lesbi puella*, vale, if he had been serious about leaving her, referring to herself with the related, third declension, adjective *Lesbis*. These words recall line 12 of Catullus 8, where Catullus bids farewell to an unnamed woman, presumably Lesbia, with *vale puella*. But even so, the implicit connection forged between Sappho and Catullus' Lesbia here is less important than Phaon's failure to follow Catullus' own literary example. As we have seen, moreover, Ovid also refers to Sappho as Lesbis twice in *Amores* 2.18. He appears more eager to evoke, prospectively if not retrospectively, his own representation of Sappho than Catullus' depictions of his beloved whose pseudonym honors Sappho.

20 Nor, for that matter, does *Heroides* 15 directly echo the Latin words of Catullus' most « Sapphic » poem, 51. This « translation » – or at least close adaptation – in Sapphic meter of Sappho 31 L-P features Catullus as appropriating Sappho's poetic role, and as calling attention to the complexities inherent in his choice of this, female, literary model by addressing both Lesbia and himself by name. Perhaps lines 111-112 of *Heroides* 15, « tears were lacking from my eyes and words from my tongue; my chest was tightened with icy chill » (*et lacrimae deerant oculis et verba palato / adstrictum gelido frigore pectus erat*) recall the physical symptoms enumerated by Catullus, but they qualify as at best an indirect allusion. Peter Knox views them as directly indebted to Sappho herself, not Catullus.[20]

Heroides 15 and *maestus* Catullus in 65

21 However, a host of scholars – Rosati, Bessone, Knox, Wiseman, Friedrich Spoth and Alessandro Barchiesi – link another passage in *Heroides* 15 with lines 10 through 14 of Catullus 65.[21] In this poem, first of the fifty something written in the elegiac meter, Catullus addresses his dead brother, comparing his own maesta carmina to the songs of « Daulias »:

> Numquam ego te, vita frater amabilior
> Aspiciam posthac? At certe semper amabo,
> Semper maesta tua carmina morte canam,
> Qualia sub densis ramorum concinit umbris
> Daulias, absumpti fata gemens Ityli
> « But certainly I will always love you. I will always sing songs sorrowful because of your death, the kinds of songs that Daulias, bemoaning the fates of Itylus taken away, sings under the thick shadows of the branches. »

22 Now *Daulias* is a learned and obscure « married name » for Procne, alluding to her husband Tereus, who ruled over Daulis. Our most extensive Roman source about Procne, her sister Philomela, and Tereus is, in fact, Ovid's own narrative at *Metamorphoses* book 6 lines 412-672. Procne, Ovid tells us, took vengeance on her husband for raping and then cutting out the tongue of Philomela by killing her own son Itys (whom Catullus calls Itylus) and serving him to Tereus for dinner. To protect the women from Tereus'wrath, the gods transformed Procne into a nightingale, Philomela a swallow, and Tereus a hoopoe.

23 Ovid's Sappho also speaks of « Daulias » as an ales, bird, at *Heroides* 15, lines 151 through 155:

> Quin etiam rami positis lugere videntur
> Frondibus, et nullae dulce queruntur aves;
> Sola virum non ulta pie maestissima mater
> Concinit Ismarium Daulias ales Ityn
> Ales Ityn, Sappho desertos cantat amores –
> «Why even the branches seem to grieve, with their leaves cast aside, and no birds sweetly complain; only the extremely sorrowful mother, the Daulian bird, having taken vengeance sacrilegiously on her husband, sings of Ismarian Itys. The bird sings of Itys, Sappho of abandoned loves (and love elegies) »

24 The Catullan homage is unmistakable. We find some of the very same words employed to describe both the nightingale and its physical landscape that appear in Catullus 65:*rami, maest* [*issim*] a, *concinit*. Especially significant, though, is Ovid's choice of the substantival adjective *Daulias* itself. For Catullus 65 provides the first extant use of this – relatively rare – epithet in Latin poetry[22].

25 There are, of course, key differences between the Catullan and Ovidian passages. Ovid furnishes more details about *Daulias* and her circumstances, refers to her dead child as Itys rather than as Itylus, and depicts the branches surrounding the nightingale as leafless rather than as thick and shade giving. Most important, though, Ovid's Sappho does not initially identify herself with the female, maternal and mourning, Daulian bird, as does Catullus. Nor does she associate the specific content of her poems with what the bird says in her songs of mourning, as Catullus does with his *carmina*, which he characterizes as *maesta* owing to his brother's death. Indeed, Sappho merely posits an analogy between the bird's lamentational singing about Itys, an irreplaceable loss, and

her own singing about her own amatory disappointment: of *amores desertos*, both loves and – like the poetry of Ovid and other Roman male elegiac poets – love elegies abandoned. While, as we shall see, she earlier describes herself as grief stricken at Phaon's departure, and there likens herself to a mother mourning a dead son, here her focus is exclusively on her role as an elegiac poet.

26 Pointing out that Sappho herself wrote about the song of the nightingale, Rosati hypothesizes that « Ovid's Sappho found in Catullus, her most congenial Latin interpreter, what the Latin poet had perhaps derived from Sappho herself. » And, inasmuch as poem 65 furnishes an introduction to another elegiac poem, 66, Catullus' translation of Callimachus' *coma Berenices*, Rosati proceeds to interpret Ovid's Catullan echo here as also serving a programmatic, « poetological » function. These lines, Rosati maintains, help to characterize Sappho as herself an elegiac poet self-consciously reflecting on an issue central to the writings of all Roman elegiac poets, the relationship between living and loving on the one hand, and poetry-writing (and poetic meter) on the other.[23]

27 The Catullan associations of the word used to introduce Sappho herself in the opening line of *Heroides* 15 – *studiosa* – further suggest an effort to emphasize her serious poetic commitments, learned and Hellenistic no less than elegiac. For Catullus employs this adjective in the first line of his final elegiac poem, 116, also in connection with his endeavors to translate Callimachus:*Saepe tibi studioso animo venante requirens / carmina uti possem mittere Battiadae*, « often seeking with eager, pursuing mind how I might be able to send you poems of Callimachus. » So, too, Catullus links poems 65 and 116, the first and last in his lengthy elegiac sequence, by referring to Callimachus with the learned patronymic Battiades (in the genitive case and at the end of the couplet) in both. Indeed, the word figures at 65, 1ine 16, in the couplet following the lines about the Daulian bird, *sed tamen in tantis maeroribus, Horatale, mitto / haec expressa tibi carmina Battiadae*, « but nevertheless in such sorrows, Hortalus, I send to you these translated poems of Callimachus ». It is noteworthy, too, that the rare word maeror, sorrow, also makes an appearance in *Heroides* 15, at line117 (maerore); here, however, Sappho is speaking critically of her living, and estranged, brother, whereas Catullus talks of his recently deceased brother with unalloyed affection.[24]

28 These Catullan echoes in Ovid's representation of Sappho, therefore, recall Catullus' own voice as he articulates his own poetic allegiances and attempts to cope with the painful loss of a close male relation. Yes, Catullus' original words transgender him, assigning him traits that are conventionally associated in Roman society with positively valued female conduct, by stressing the similarities between the poet speaker, mourning his dead brother, and a mother bird grieving over the death of her young son. But Ovid's Sappho merely locates this bird in her own wooded landscape, and only compares herself with this bird, a female like herself, because both sing of younger men now lost to them, Sappho in the form of love elegies.

Heroides 15 and Catullus' Attis in 63

29 Ovid's Sappho describes her own beloved Phaon, and her reactions to their amatory difficulties, in Catullan language as well: language evoking the castrated youth Attis of poem 63, a poem written in the exotic galliambic (rather than the elegiac) meter. At lines 93-94, addressing and praising Phaon, Sappho exclaims, *o nec adhuc iuvenis, nec iam puer,*

utilis aetas, / o decus atque aevi gloria magna tui, « O not yet a youth, no longer a boy, a useful age, o ornament and great glory of your time. » The anaphoric style, and words *puer* and in particular *decus*, recall lines 62 through 63 of Catullus 63. There Attis contrasts his new identity as a castrato, and to his way of thinking therefore a woman, with the multiple aspects of his former male self. Incanting the first person singular personal pronoun six times, he proclaims *ego mulier*, *ego adolescens*, *ego ephebus*, *ego puer / ego gymnasi fui flos, ego eram decus olei*, « I, now a woman, I was a young man, I was an ephebe, I was a boy, I have been the flower of the gymnasium, I was the glory of the wrestling ring. »

30 Attis' former, male, identity only rates brief mention in Catullus 63, insofar as his self-castration occurs at line 5, and from that point onward in the poem Attis is routinely described with adjectives that have feminine endings, beginning with citata in line 8. Yet Catullus' portrayal of the still-masculine Attis in lines 1 through 5 echoes in the self-description of Sappho at *Heroides* 15, lines 137 and following. Catullus relates that Attis, goaded by frenzied madness (*stimulatus ibi furienti rabie*), reached (*tetigit*) the woodland of the goddess Cybele and entered (*adiit*) her dark places encircled with forests (*opaca silvis redimita loca*). Sappho describes herself as seeking the caves and woodland (*antra nemusque peto*) like one whom the frenzying Enyo has touched (*quam furialis Enyo / attigit*). « I find », Sappho then states, « a forest that has covered dark places with much foliage (*multa texit opaca coma*). » It is indeed in this very forest where *Daulias*, the mourning nightingale, to whom Catullus likens himself in 65, sings.

31 What do these similarities between Ovid's Sappho and Catullus'Attis in his original, male, state imply about the similarities that Ovid's Sappho foregrounds between her beloved Phaon and Catullus' Attis, similarities between Phaon and Attis as the latter mourns the lost stages and signs of his homoerotically appealing youthful masculinity? Is Ovid suggesting that Sappho desires to be like Phaon as well as loved by Phaon? To engage in a « sex role crossover »? Such an interpretation, when considered alongside the evidence marshalled by Gordon for the mannish qualities ascribed to this Sappho, is difficult to dismiss. Gordon claims that « Ovid's Sappho is so masculine that when she chooses a man, she chooses a boy. » Evocations of Attis in Catullus 63 would additionally suggest that Sappho validates her own, masculine, erotic worth by identifying with this boy in the evanescent and self-annihilated flower of his beauty.[25]

Heroides 15 and Catullus' fraternal lamentations in 68 and 101

32 Besides the echoes from Catullus 65, in which Catullus laments his brother's death, *Heroides* 15 evokes passages from two other elegiac poems about the loss of Catullus' brother, 68 and 101. At line 109 of *Heroides* 15, Ovid's Sappho relates that she has been told fugiunt tua gaudia. Sappho's language here calls to mind Catullus'repeated statement – first at 68 line.23, then at 95 – that, with his brother's death, *omnia... perierunt gaudia nostra have perished*. Similarly, at 115-116, as noted earlier, she compares her sorrow over her loss of Phaon to that of a mourning mother over a dead son:*non aliter quam si nati pia mater adempti / portet ad exstructos corpus inane rogos*, « no differently than a devoted mother would carry the empty body of a son taken away to the heaped up funeral pyres. »

The word adempti recalls Catullus'address to his dead brother at 101 line 6 as *indigne... adempte mihi*.

33 By evoking Catullus' poignant and agonized verses about his own brother, as well as Catullus' representation in poem 65 of his brother's death as seriously affecting his own ability to write verses at all, Ovid's Sappho primarily aligns her distressed emotional state with that of a male poet trying to come to terms, artistically as well as emotionally, with the loss of a beloved male kinsman. And inappropriately so. Phaon is not dead, try though Ovid's Sappho may to dramatize her plight as maternal bereavement.

34 Admittedly, there is a longstanding, etymologically grounded connection between weeping (*flebilis*) Elegy, personified as female, and funeral lament. Ovid himself elaborates upon it at *Amores* 3.9.3-4, where he portrays Elegy herself as mourning the death of Tibullus:*flebilis indignos, Elegia, solve capillos!/ a nimis ex vero nunc tibi nomen erit*, « weeping Elegy, loosen your unworthy tresses / now your name will be extremely truthful ». Indeed, Ovid's Sappho would appear to allude to Amores 3.9 itself, as well as to these associations between elegy and mournful weeping at *Heroides* 15.7, *flendus amor meus est – elegiae flebile carmen*, « my love must be wept over, elegies are a weeping mode of song. » One might even argue that Ovid has here assimilated Sappho to the personified, female Elegy of *Amores* 3.9: after all, the phrase *corpus inane*, used at *Heroides* 15. 116 in the simile comparing Sappho to a mother mourning over her dead son, appears at *Amores* 3.9.6 to describe the dead Tibullus.[26]

35 Nevertheless, Ovid forges much stronger bonds of poetic identity between Sappho and her « most congenial » male Roman poetic interpreter Catullus. Rimell argues that « the interrogative thrust of [*Heroides* 15] is dependent... largely on the frame and site for this bittersweet affair: the love letter... The uncertainty surrounding the identity and role of author... is foregrounded by a detailed discourse of epistolary seduction in the *Amores* and *Ars. Amatoria*, where the love-letter is situated at the core of Ovid's erotics of deception. » It therefore warrants emphasis that both Catullus 65, addressed to Hortalus, and the first forty lines of 68, addressed to another male of uncertain name, may be interpreted as « cover letters » to the poems that follow. Indeed, the first two lines of 68 present themselves as responding to another, tear-soaked letter (2 *conscriptum hoc lacrimis mittis epistolium*).

36 But by evoking these earlier Catullan « correspondence » texts, Ovid's Sappho additionally, and distinctively, aligns her epistolary project with previous, literary programmatic, efforts by an influential, male pioneer in the realm of elegy. Like Catullus 65, which prefaces a translation from the Greek, *Heroides* 15 validates a « translation » of Sappho from a Greek to a Latin poet as well as her transformation from a lyric to an elegiac poet. Like Catullus 68a, which prefaces an assertion of poetry's power to reward and immortalize its male addressee, *Heroides* 15 voices its speaker's hopes in the power of poetry to transfigure the emotions and existence of the man that she addresses.

Heroides 15 and the gendering of Sappho's Catullan voice

37 In a recent study of Catullus and the poetics of Roman manhood, David Wray has argued persuasively that feminized and delicate Callimachean as well as aggressive and competitive Archilochean dimensions are central to Catullus' agonistically performed

poetic *persona*. By the same token, TP Wiseman's work on Catullus has underlined the dominating, masculine qualities that he repeatedly ascribes to Lesbia.[27] In other words, Catullus'poetry offers richly transgendered characterizations of both his own poetic *persona* and the figure of Lesbia that Ovid could have evoked in his portrayal of Sappho. Yet Ovid apparently preferred to have his Sappho engage with the text of Catullus by identifying with Catullus at other moments in his poetry, moments when Catullus voices his learned poetic credo, his grief over his brother's loss, and (through his representation of the sexually self-absorbed Attis) his complex emotional reactions to the short-lived, homoerotic allure of youthful males. Rather than transgender his Sappho, as Catullus transgenders both the character of his Lesbia and his own authorial presence, Ovid employs Catullan echoes to intensify her masculine qualities, her sex-role cross-over.

38 Furthermore, as Ovid in the role of poet-speaker frequently resembles his Sappho in sounding a good deal like Catullus himself, so Ovid gives us a Catullan Sappho who sounds a good deal like Ovid himself.[28] She states, in lines 79 through 80 of *Heroides* 15:*molle meum levibusque cor est violabile telis, / et semper causa est, cum ego semper amem*, « my heart is soft, and damageable by light weapons, and there is always a reason why I always love. » These lines recall an earlier Ovidian poem, line 10 of the ostensibly self-revelatory *Amores* 2.4, *centum sunt causae cur ego semper amem*, « there are a hundred reasons why I always love, » They are themselves recalled in lines 65 through 66 of Ovid's autobiographical *Tristia* 4.10, *which molle Cupidineis nec inexpugnabile telis / cor mihi, quodquelevis causa moveret, erat*, « my heart was soft and not unassailable by Cupid's weapons, the sort of thing which a slight impulse would move. » Scholars have viewed these verbal affinities linking *Heroides* 15 with both an earlier and a later first person Ovidian poem as reason for disputing its Ovidian authorship.[29] There is far better reason to interpret the Sappho created by Ovid as a vital component of his evolving yet in some ways unchanging poetic persona, and accept her words as Ovid's own. After all, Ovid's Sappho is an amatory, and literary, figure – championing as she redefines the genre of elegy – that the unproblematically masculine Ovid himself in turn could become, and did become.[30]

NOTES

1. Pamela Gordon, « The Lover's Voice in *Heroides* 15: Or, Why Is Sappho A Man? » in Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner, *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton 1997) 274-291. As Gordon notes, her title itself « pays tribute to Marilyn Skinner's 'Woman and Language in Archaic Greece, or, Why Is Sappho a Woman', in [N.S.] Rabinowitz and [A.E] Richlin [eds.] 1993 [*Feminist Theory and the Classics*. New York and London]. Skinner's title is a rejoinder to David Halperin's essay, « Why Is Diotima a Woman ? » (in Halperin [*One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*. New York and London] 1990: 113-151).

2. Gordon, 275, « Ovid's treatment of Sappho fits a pattern that emerges when we view the treatment of female homoeroticism in Roman literature in general. Almost all tribades (women who desire other women) who appear in ancient Latin texts are explicitly masculinized, sometimes so radically that their very bodies become male. In this chapter I, like Hallett, suggest that Ovid's Sappho is no exception. Focusing upon the construction of Sappho's erotic desire in

Heroides 15, I suggest that the Ovidian Sappho writes so much 'like a man'that the poem would work well as a parody of what French psychoanalytic critic Luce Irigaray has called « hom/m/osexuality'(a play on l'homme), or what Esther Newton has dubbed the 'Mythic Mannish Lesbian'». The essay by Hallett to which Gordon refers, « Female Homeroticism and the Denial of Roman Reality in Latin Literature, » originally appeared in the *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3 (1989) 207-227; it has been reprinted in W.R. Dyson and S. Donaldson, eds., *Homosexuality in the Ancient World* (New York 1992) 179-197 as well as Hallett and Skinner, 256-273.

3. Gordon, 274 and 275, n. 4: « Although I do not consider the attribution to Ovid a settled issue, in this essay for convenience I will refer to our author as 'Ovid.'» She refers the reader to R.J. Tarrant, « The Authenticity of the Letter of Sappho to Phaon, » *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 85 (1981) 133-153; P.E. Knox, ed., *Ovid, Heroides. SelectEpistles* (Cambridge 1995); and L.D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmissions: A Surveyof the Latin Classics* (Oxford 1983) for « some arguments against authenticity (with bibliography) ». See also C.E.Murgia, « Imitation and Authenticity in Ovid:*Metamorphose*s 1 477 and Heroides 15 », *AJP* 106 (1985) 471.

4. Gianpiero Rosati, « Sabinus, the *Heroides* and the Poet-Nightingale: Some Observations on the Authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus*, » *Classical Quarterly* 46 (1996) 207-216.

5. Gordon, 280 and 282. On 282, she also contrasts Ovid's Sappho with Phaedra in *Heroides* 4, « the closest parallel among the heroines for Sappho's lust », who « shrinks from describing sexual acts or fantasies », and « sees her passion for Hippolytus as an egregious female vice that runs in the family. » So, too, Gordon observes, on 283, that « all this masculinity is incompatible (in Ovid's scenario) with the surest emblem of womanhood: mother love... To Ovid's Sappho, however, [her daughter] Kleis is a burden... One suspects that Ovid's Sappho would gladly give up Kleis to get Phaon back. »

6. On the relationship between *Amores* 2.18 and *Heroides* 15, and its role in the argument for or against Ovidian authorship, see Howard Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974) 300-318; Tarrant, 148-153; Rosati 207-212; Vicky Rimell, « Epistolary Fictions: Authorial Identity in *Heroides* 15, » *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* N.S. 45 (1999) 110-116.

7. Federica Bessone, « Saffo, la lirica, l'elegia: su Ovidio, *Heroides* 15, » *Materiali ediscussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 51 (2003) 209-243; Gregson Davis, « From Lyric to Elegy: The Inscription of the Elegiac Subject in *Heroides* 15 (Sappho to Phaon) », forthcoming in the *Festschrift for William S. Anderson*, ed. W. Batstone and G. Tissol (2004) 186-208.

Intertextual links between Tibullus Book 3 and *Heroides* 15 may be especially worth exploring. Book 3 begins with six elegies ascribed to a young male elegist, Lygdamus, and includes eleven elegies about — and to my mind by — a woman, perhaps Lygdamus'sister, Sulpicia; the tribute to Catullus in Tibullus 3.6, and the similarity between 3.5.18 and *Tristia* 4.10.6, both discussed in note 19 below, would alone suggest the value of such an exploration.

8. For transgendering, see Barbara F. McManus, *Classics and Feminism: Gendering theClassics* (New York 1997) 94-96: « Transgendered moments, traits, or behaviors are those that have come to be considered appropriate for both men and women but that are still affected by gender expectations and gender power differentials; in other words, these moments or behaviors are interpreted and evaluated differently when performed by different sexes. » McManus differentiates transgendered moments, positively viewed, from negatively perceived sex-role-crossovers; following Gordon, I would maintain that the « masculine » conduct ascribed to Sappho of *Heroides* 15 is better described as a « sex-role-crossover ».

9. Rimell, 109-110: « This Sappho looks very written, yet as the only heroine-writer, and as the love-poet often cited as Ovid's influential predecessor, she can represent the culmination and reification of the Heroides'illusion of female authorship... What is it for an Ovidian author conspicuously to write, through and over, the poetess whose work he recommends should be read alongside of his own, and whose influence on his own writing and lover-affairs he hints at on several occasions ?... *Heroides* 15 stages authorship as a volatile rivalry in which both parties

can be seen to betray their mutual dependency. » For scholarly efforts to interpret Ovid's Sappho as feminized into an « archetypal forsaken woman », and as an « alternative, nonaggressive, feminine model for erotic desire » by Kauffman and Lipking, see Gordon, 275.

10. Davis, 187-188. « In pursuit of this covert agenda, » Davis continues, « Ovid elaborates a strategy in the *Heroides* of incorporating female figures, who are representative of other major generic contexts, into the elegiac sphere... [F]igures like Briseis and Penelope... are to be conceived... primarily as tokens of epic treatments of amor, just as Medea and Phaedra are, in their turn, tokens of the tragic representation of the erotic theme. To put it another way, Ovid in these fictive epistles... is engaged in an 'intergeneric'game, in which prestigious genres are played off against elegy – to their ultimate disadvantage. »

11. As Rimell remarks, on 110, « Via a series of pointed verbal allusions, as well as reflections of themes and scenarios, [*Heroides* 15] negotiates a complex relationship with Ovid's commentary on love letters in the *Amore*s and *Ars*, so that [his educated readers] are almost encouraged to view its challenges as a 'test'of knowledge acquired in Ovid's earlier texts, as well as of [their] loyalty to the Ovidian authorial persona, based largely on an ability to recognize its originality. This is an infinitely complex exercise (and the fun or frustration of reading this poem). » Much the same can be said about the relationship between this poem and the Catullan corpus, although I would regard the experience of reading *Heroides* 15 for Catullan devotees as not only a challenging and ideally fun exercise, but also as an especially rewarding engagement with the text.

12. On these homages to Sappho in poems 11, 35, 50 and 62, see, for example, T.P. Wiseman, *Catullus and his World* (Cambridge 1985) 11-112, 119-121, 144-145, 146 (source of the quote on poem 11), 148, 152-155.

13. For Sappho as the Tenth Muse, see *Anth. Pal.* 7.14 (Antipater of Sidon on Sappho) and 9 506 (Plato on the Muses) as well as 9,66; 9 521; 9 571 ff. See also Plutarch, *Amatorius* 18. As Wiseman, 130, notes, « the name 'Lesbia'occurs sixteen times in Catullus'poems, always in the nominative or vocative cases. »

14. Apuleius, *Apology* 10:*Eadem igitur opera accusent C. Catullum quod Lesbiam proClodia nominarit*. Wiseman, 130, speculates that « it may have been Ovid's friend Hyginus, an authority on modern poets, who first made public the identification referred to by the learned Apuleius in A.D. 158: 'Gaius Catullus used the name Lesbia instead of Clodia.'» For Clodia Metelli herself, see Wiseman, 15-53.

15. On Ticidas and his affair with Caecilia Metella – wife of P. Lentulus Spinther, and also wife or lover of M. Clodius Asopus, see Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essay*s (Leicester 1974) 188-191.

16. Nicolas Gross has pointed out to me that *Heroides* 15. 5, *forsitan et quare mea sintalterna requiras* seems to echo Catullus 85.1, *quare id faciam, fortasse requiris*, as well; this echo hence sustains the implicit association made between Sappho and Catullus with the adjective *studios*a in line 1, discussed below.

17. Gianpiero Rosati has also called my attention to the « homagistic » detail of Catullus'crowned head, signifying his path-breaking role as Tibullus'elegiac predecessor (« il percorso che da Catullo 'prepara'l'elegia »), and, in a learned pun, contrasting to the implicitly uncovered head of Calvus, whose cognomen literally means « bald ».

18. On Catullus'Lesbia as a speaker, see Micaela Janan, *When the Lamp is Shattered:Desire and Narrative in Catullus* (Carbondale, Illinois 1994) 78: « Catullus sets himself up as 'reader' of Lesbia-as-text in his obsessive attention (peculiar to the [elegiac] epigrams) to decoding her speech: he obsessively interrogates her 'true meaning and true desire'». The poems that portray Lesbia as speaking include two of the polymetrics – 7 (1 *quaeris*) and 36 (4 *vovit*) – as well as five of the elegiacs 70 (1 *dicit*... 3 *dicit*); 72 (1 *dicebas*); 83.1 *dicit*... 3 *gannit* and *obloquitur);* 92 (1 *dicit*); and 109 (1 *proponis*).

It is also possible that Lesbia is addressed and acknowledged as a speaker at line 7 of 72, with

inquis, since she is referred to in the second person singular elsewhere in the poem, with dicebas, te (three times) and es. In addition, I have argued that Lesbia may be the speaker of the final and problematic lines of poems 2 (7-9) and 51 (13-16), in Hallett, « Women's Voices and Catullus'Poetry, » CW 95.4 (2002) 421-424.

Previous work on the female voice in elegy, and its masculine dimensions – most notably Rosati, « L'elegia al femminile: le *Heroides* di Ovidio (e altre heroides) », *MD* 29 (1992) 71-94 – has not taken account of Catullus'speaking females, some of whom speak in elegiac verse. In a recent communication, moreover, Rosati has suggested to me that in *Heroides* 15 Ovid appears to situate in Catullus, and specifically in Catullus'reading of Sappho, the origin of the « so-called Catullan revolution », namely the masculinization of the female figure (who becomes the *domina)* and the parallel feminization of the poet-lover. Hence, as Bessone has contended, *Heroides* 15 may be interpreted as recapitulating, in reverse, the entire history of Roman elegy.

19. For these women's voices, see Hallett (2002). The words that Catullus places in Ariadne's mouth in 64 are praised at Tibullus 3.6.41, « thus learned Catullus sang on your behalf, daughter of Minos, recalling the shameful deeds of an ungrateful man » (*sic cecinit pro tedoctus, Minoi, Catullus / ingrati referens impia facta viri*). Furthermore, in the preceding poem – 3.5.18 – Lygdamus, the putative author of Tibullus 3. 1-6, refers to the year of his birth, 43 BCE, as a time when « each consul fell to a similar fate », *cum cecidit fato consul uterque pari*.

This exact line is also used by Ovid to describe his own birth in 43 BCE at *Tristia* 4.10.6, a poem composed after his exile in 8 CE. Hence scholars often assume that Lygdamus must be quoting Ovid, even though Lygdamus and Sulpicia, the other poet represented by a series of elegies in Tibullus 3, would seem, like Ovid as well as Tibullus himself, to have written under the patronage of C. Valerius Messalla Corvinus during the years immediately before and after Tibullus'death in 19 BCE. An alternative explanation is that in *Tristia* 4.10 Ovid pays tribute to the poetry of Lygdamus, a member of his youthful poetic circle who appreciated Catullus'female ventriloquizing, much as he pays tribute to Catullus himself elsewhere.

20. Knox, 299. They also recall Ovid's own description of Corinna's dying, male, poetic parrot at *Amores* 2. 6.47 *nec tamen ignavo stupuerunt verba palato*.

21. Rosati (1996), 214-215; Bessone, 218-219; Knox, 305; Wiseman, *Catullan Questions* (Leicester 1969) 17-18; Friedrich Spoth, *Ovids Heroides als Elegien* (Munich 1992) 29-30; Alessandro Barchiesi, « Riflessivo e futuro. Due modi di allusione nella poesia, ellenistica e augustea », *Aevum* (*ant*) 5 (1992) 241.

22. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P.W. Glare (Oxford 1982) 485; Rosati (1996), 214 n.36. Ovid does not use this adjective in his narrative about Procne and Philolmela in the (non-elegiac) *Metamorphoses*, making the Catullan homage here all the more striking.

23. Rosati (1996) 215. He also examines the similarities between both Catullus 65.11-14 and *Heroides* 15 151-154 on the one hand, and *Threicium Daulias ales Ityn* at line 106 of the *Epicedion Drusi* / *Consolatio ad Liviam* on the other, assuming that the *Consolatio* must postdate both poems (and that therefore the *Epistula Sapphus* cannot, as Tarrant argues, date from the Neronian or Flavian period). The reference in the *Consolatio* passage, of course, stresses the similarities between two mothers mourning their dead sons, one historical, the other mythic. Catullus 65 and *Heroides* 15, however, link the mythic mourning mother with, respectively, individuals in very different situations: a man lamenting his dead brother and a woman crying for her lost male lover. The closer, more literal similarities between Livia and « the Daulian bird » in the *Consolatio* would seem to support, in Rosati's words, « the posteriority of the *Consolatio* », especially as *mitis nuncdenique* at *Consolatio* 105 appears to provide a « corrective clarification of *virum non ultapie* at *Heroides* 15.153.

24. Rosati (1996), 215. n. 37, who comments on the rarity of this word in Augustan poetry; its few appearances, though, include *Consolatio ad Liviam* 294. Bessone, 218-221 not only discusses the Catullan pedigree of *maeror*, but also discerns an echo of Catullus 68.1-4 (*etsi de assiduo confectum*

cura dolore / sevocat a doctis, Ortale, virginibus, / nec potis est dulcisMusarum expromere fetus / mens animi, tantis fluctuat ipsa malis) at *Heroides* 15.195-196 (*dolor artibus obstat / ingeniumque meis substit omne malis*).

25. Gordon, 284 Cf. also 285, « In pursuing a pretty boy, Sappho conforms to the Greek stylistics of male sexual behavior... [A]s though forgetting her own gender, Sappho explicitly equates her passion with a masculine drive » (at 85-86 *quid mirum, si me primaelanuginis aetas / abstulit, artque anni quos vir amare potest*).

Davis, 194, has a different explanation « if the image of Ovid's [fictive female writer]... is as self-serving as we claim, then Sappho's change of sexual orientation is over-determined by the generic norms operating within Latin love elegy. In conformity with the type, the freshly transfigured female elegist of the epistle must therefore be represented as ruled by a passion for a *puer*, the love-object that symmetrically corresponds, in the case of the male elegist, with the conventional *puella*. » He does not, however, consider Sappho's representation of her passion in lines 85-86.

26. And cf. Rimell, 115: « Yet the scene is set for the legitimation of Sappho's transformation into Roman elegist: she weeps, and elegy (characterized as *flebilis* in *Amores* 3.9) is suited to tears. »

27. David Wray, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood* (Cambridge 2001) 167 ff.; Wiseman, *Catullus and his World*, 146, 157 ff.

28. And cf. Jacobson, 281: « One almost senses that [Ovid] considers [Sappho] his female counterpart. »

29. See, for example, Knox, 294-295: This couplet is at odds with the reasoning of the preceding verses. Sappho has just declared that she is neglecting her appearance because Phaon is away. This statement of fidelity is jarred by the present portrayal of fickleness. The couplet may best be explained [by Tarrant] as a conflation of two Ovidian passages:*Trist*. 4.10-55-56... and *Am*. 2.4.10... Each of these passages coheres effectively with its own context in these poems, but that cannot be said of this couplet of the ES, which is apparently an imitation and must therefore have been composed after the *Tristia*. »

30. This paper was initially presented at the Centenary Meeting of the [British] Classical Association in April 2003 at the University of Warwick, and later served as the basis for an editorial workshop on « Writing an Abstract for Professional Presentation » at the Fall 2003 meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States in Wilmington, Delaware on October 10, 2003. Thanks to Pamela Gordon, Nicolas Gross, Barbara McManus, Gianpiero Rosati, my co-facilitators at the CAAS editorial workshop (Robert Boughner, Barbara Gold and John Miller as well as Barbara McManus), and my students Luigi De Luca and John Valter for their helpful suggestions at various stages of this project.

ABSTRACTS

This paper examines some echoes of Catullus' poetry in Heroides 15, chiefly but not exclusively from Catullus' poems in the elegiac meter. It argues that these “Catullan voices” strengthen the contention of Pamela Gordon (1997) that Ovid presents his readers with a “mannish Sappho”, a “Roman construction with few roots in the early Greek tradition.”

INDEX

Mots-clés: intertextuality, elegy, sexuality, gender identity, transgendering, sex-role cross–over, authorial persona, ventriloquizing, translation

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